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Letter dated 30 March 2007 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Further to the note verbale of 27 February 2007 in which the Government of Nicaragua, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, officially put forward its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2007-2010 at the election to be held during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in May 2007, I have the honour to attach herewith a document containing Nicaragua's voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could arrange for this document and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Mario H. **Castellón Duarte**
Ambassador
Alternate Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 30 March 2007 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Contributions and commitments made by Nicaragua to the promotion and protection of human rights

1. The promotion and protection of human rights by Nicaragua

The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of Nicaragua is fully committed to the promotion and effective protection of all human rights, in a framework of cooperation and international solidarity.

Nicaragua, as a founding Member of the United Nations loyal to the principles of the Organization, has drawn on its own national experience to help to achieve the important goals of the United Nations, particularly as regards the strengthening of international peace and security and the encouragement of development, while striving at all times to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

With the establishment of the Human Rights Council, Nicaragua wishes to participate and contribute actively to the work of this body, in order to guarantee everyone the full enjoyment of all human rights, both civil, political, economic, social and cultural, including the right to development.

2. Contributions made by Nicaragua to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels

Contributions at the national level

Nicaragua, in recognizing, promoting and respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Nicaraguans, has made progress in the legal and administrative sphere, and has developed institutions guaranteeing the enforcement of national and international human rights standards, with emphasis on the most vulnerable sectors such as children and adolescents, women, indigenous peoples, disabled people and migrants.

It has established the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, which is a state body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights, whose subdivisions include the offices of the Special Procurator for Children and Adolescents; the Special Procurator for Women; the Special Procurator for Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities; the Special Procurator for Disabled People and the Special Procurator for Persons Deprived of Their Liberty and Civic Participation.

Other institutions established at the national level to promote and guarantee the implementation of the rights of children and adolescents, together with the family, society in general and the State, include the National Council for the Comprehensive Care of Children and Adolescents (CONAPINA), and a Childhood and Adolescence Code has been enacted.

The Nicaraguan Women's Institute is the government body responsible for implementing plans for the development and protection of women's rights.

Significant progress has also been made in enacting legislation for the protection of indigenous people and people of African descent; such legislation

includes the Statute of Autonomy for the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast and the Act governing the Communally Owned Property of the Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Communities of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.

Concerning judicial protection and access to justice, Nicaragua has made significant efforts to move towards establishing legislative and administrative standards for the protection of human rights; these include the modernization of the judicial system, notably through the establishment of the Office of the Public Defender, which defends on behalf of the State those persons who cannot afford to pay for their own defence. In addition, the Attorney General's Office has been separated from the Public Prosecutor's Office, in order to separate the administration of the interests of the State and those of society, or the direct victims.

Contributions at the international level

As part of its contribution to the international systems for the promotion and protection of human rights, Nicaragua has in recent years complied with the principal international human rights instruments by signing, acceding to or ratifying international legal instruments such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children in Armed Conflict, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

3. Commitments made by Nicaragua to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels

The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity has made combating poverty and extreme poverty the basic pillar of its platform, in accordance with the millennium development goals and with the International Bill of Human Rights. Action to combat poverty and extreme poverty is based on several approaches which include combating hunger, introducing free public education and health care and promoting employment for all Nicaraguans.

Commitments at the national level

Fundamental rights of all Nicaraguans: The Government of Nicaragua is committed to promoting, protecting and strengthening the human rights of the Nicaraguan people by improving their living conditions. To that end, the rights designed to meet the demands of the Nicaraguan people and cover the most urgent basic services, such as free education and health care, clean drinking water and sanitation, food, housing and employment, are fundamental and cross-cutting themes of the policies and programmes conducted by the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity.

Peace and the right to development: The Government believes that reconciliation is a fundamental means of achieving development and combating poverty, and thus advocates for a culture of peace which fosters respect for and promotion of all freedoms (religion, expression, information, organization, etc.) and the rights of all citizens; this will make it possible to

create favourable conditions for investment in human resources to lead to sustainable development.

Respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples: Nicaraguans fully recognize that they belong to a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual nation. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance are scourges that violate the human rights and fundamental freedoms of our nations and we are committed to eradicating them. Our country commits itself to using the law to preserve, promote and protect the culture of indigenous peoples and ethnic communities.

Women's rights: Respect for and promotion of the rights of women is a key element of the Government's programme. The Government is a staunch promoter of the human rights and gender equity of Nicaraguan women, in rural and urban areas, and in all their roles. One of the measures designed to reach that goal is the promotion of a 50 per cent quota for women in posts in all national and local government institutions and organizations.

Young people's rights: Through a series of projects and programmes, Nicaragua will vigorously promote the rights of young people with regard to education and access to university loans, employment, a healthy life, sport, art and culture. The Youth Institute has been established for this purpose; its main objective is to encourage and promote plans and programmes aimed at involving young people in activities designed to help them become well-rounded individuals.

Civic rights and action to combat corruption: The Government of Nicaragua advocates for direct democracy in the form of civic power, in which the people participate in the elaboration of local and national budgets and exercise budget oversight, and have primary responsibility for implementation of social programmes, ongoing monitoring of costs, quality of work and resources applied, and assessment of the performance of public servants. To this end, we shall promote decision-making by the people, who shall approve, through "civic assemblies", all processes, both national and local, and all economic, social and cultural policies. This indispensable approach will also be the most direct and effective way of combating the scourge of corruption, which is one of the Government's priority goals.

The rights of all countries throughout the world: The Government of Nicaragua will promote and establish the best and most respectful relations with all peoples and Governments throughout the world, through political, cultural and commercial exchanges in all areas of activity.

Commitments at the international level

Nicaragua is a State party to the major international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional Protocol to the

Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

In 2007, Nicaragua will be submitting reports under various human rights treaties after a hiatus of more than a decade. Nicaragua's commitment goes beyond the submission of reports; the Government expects to follow up any observations and/or comments which may arise following the submission and evaluation of such reports. In this way, Nicaragua will comply with the ultimate goal of developing public policies that foster the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

Nicaragua has also established an Inter-agency Committee on Human Rights (CIDH) aimed at guaranteeing participation by all sectors involved in implementing the provisions of the human rights treaties. The establishment of the Committee has facilitated the process of consulting the various Government and civil society sources and processing the information obtained. It will result in reports that are based on national consensus.

Nicaragua pledges to cooperate with the Human Rights Council in order to strengthen its laudable work of protecting and promoting human rights:

By promoting and participating actively in the work of the Council, in a spirit of cooperation, inclusion and authentic dialogue on thematic aspects related to human rights;

By guaranteeing an effective response to human rights violations, wherever they occur, and by contributing to the Council's normative work;

By working jointly with the entire membership of the Human Rights Council in order to ensure that all fundamental rights, particularly the rights of minorities, are respected;

By supporting the work of United Nations bodies, in particular that of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Nicaragua reaffirms its open invitation to all the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

It maintains its offer to be one of the first countries to be reviewed by the Human Rights Council under the universal periodic review mechanism, in a spirit of cooperation and constructive dialogue, and pledges to implement any recommendations that body may make.

It pledges to support and cooperate in the adoption of new international human rights instruments wherever gaps in the protection and promotion of human rights exist.